

391. *Religion and Vertue the sure way to
Humane Favour and Esteem.*

IN A
SERMON

Preach'd at
HERTFORD,

March the 11th. 17¹⁴/₁₅.

At the usual Solemnity of the
HERTFORD-School-Feast.

By *Charles Chambres* M. A.
Of *Jesus College*, Oxon. And Curate of the Parish
Church of *Hitchin*.

O X F O R D,

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Mar. 26. 1715.



T O
Heylock Kingsley Esq;
S T E W A R D,
A N D T O

V. The Worthy GENTLEMEN, and
Reverend the CLERGY, who
were present at the *Hertford-*
School-Feast.

GENTLEMEN,

YOUR *Joynt and Favour-*
able Requests to have this
mean Discourse, which I
had the Honour to Preach
before you, Printed; and my Parti-
cular Obligations to Mr STEWARD
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(which are too many to mention here, and such as perhaps would offend his Modesty to have express'd,) would make a Resolute Denial an Unpardonable Piece of Incivility to You, as well as of Ingratitude to Him. Wherefore in Compliance with your repeated Desires, I have submitted it to a Publick View; and, such as it is, do most humbly Dedicate it to your Service, who am, Gentlemen,

Your much Obliged,

and most Obedient

Humble Servant,

CHARLES CHAMBRES.

Prov. III. 4.

So shalt thou find favour, and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

THE Wise King Solomon, whose Experience in all Things Natural, and his divine Knowledge by Inspiration entitled him to the just Character of being the wisest of Men, gives us in the Text a remarkable Proof of his Superior Judgment and Sagacity.

In the Beginning of the Chapter, Verse the first, he exhorts his Son to Religion under a disguised Command of Obedience to Himself, that a Sense of his Natural Obligation to his Parent might the more powerfully engage his Dutiful Service to God his Maker. *My son, keep my law, and let not thine heart forget my commandments*, meaning That Law, and Those Commandments which he by Inspiration had received from God, and did reveal to Mankind to regulate and to adorn human Converse: and which he might as well call His Law and Commandments, as St Paul in his Second Epistle to *Timothy* (a) calls the Gospel of Christ his Gospel, because Preach'd and Delivered by him.

These his Commandments originally Divine, he in the 2d verse encourages his Son to observe, with an assurance that Peace and long Life should be part of the Blessed Consequences of it. *For length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee.*

(a) Ch. 2. v. 8.

And in the 3^d verse he specifies them under particular Characters of *Mercy* and *Truth*. *Let not mercy and truth forsake thee*; which consider'd in their utmost Latitude, implicitly contain, and stand fairly to represent all the Duties of Religion; *Mercy* signifying that Benignity of Temper, that Charity and Readiness to do Good, which all Men, for the Sake of God, are obliged to one towards another; which Disposition is utterly inconsistent with all Those Vices which have any Tendency to Molest or Injure Mankind: and *Truth* signifying that Faithfulness and Sincerity of Heart to God and Man, in all those Duties, which from the Rule of Common Justice and Equity, we have any special obligation to.

These therefore in a very pressing manner he binds upon his Son; And as a token of his due regard to Precepts of such Importance, he bids him in the words immediately following, and in the same Verse, to *Bind them about his neck, and write them upon the table of his heart*; alluding to a Custom among the Jews of wearing the Decalogue or Summary of the Moral Law upon their Breast, to keep them in close Remembrance of their Duty; which constant Remembrance, without doubt, of their Religious Obligations, must needs have a strong Influence upon their Practice to reform it, and a mighty Efficacy to Preserve their Integrity.

And such an intimate Regard to Religion, couch'd under the Name of *his* Law and Commandments, and specified under the Characters of *Mercy* and *Truth* he farther Encourages in the 4th verse (which are the words of the Text) with an Assurance of the Consequent Favours of God and Man. *So shalt thou find favour, and good understanding in the sight of God and man.*

And

And here the Wisdom of Solomon, the Royal Preacher of the Doctrine in the Text, is manifestly superior to the Wisdom of the World. For though that *Religion*, which is a supposed Obedience to the revealed Will of God, and the best Method of doing Him the Greatest Honour, should be Pleasing to God, is a thing not difficult to be conceived; yet that such a Divine Institution, so Spiritual in it's Nature and Obligations should by any means be agreeable to the *Carnal* Desires of Man, or in any respects pleasing to Him, is not so easy under the stupifying Degeneracy of human Nature to be Imagin'd; That Religion under all it's present Discouragements and Reproaches, and the *general* Contempt of it in the World, should nevertheless be agreeable to the *generality* of the World, is a kind of seeming Paradox, That notwithstanding the Profane Scurrilities of *Atheists*, the Unworthy and Blaspheming Tenets of all the Heterodox and Dividing *Heretics*, besides the no less Scandal falling upon it through the extravagant *Immorality* of every Age, it should still continue amiable in the sight of Sinfull Men, is strange to Conceive; especially considering how engaging a *Compliance* in Sin, is, or a *Confederacy* in an ill Design: And moreover what Austerities of Mortification, Self-denial and extreme Patience, Religion imposes on it's Melancholy Votaries; And what Barbarities and Persecutions They that have been most Religious, have Suffer'd from Men meerly on account of their Religion, none but a *Solomon* one perfectly acquainted with the Tendencies of Things to Promote or Frustrate human Happiness, or One well instructed in his *Book of Wisdom* could have first Taught such a Doctrine, and reconcile it to the Humours and Contrary Observations of Men,

that *Religion* was the nearest way to the Favour and Good Understanding of *Men*, as well as God.

This Doctrine then of Solomon supposed to be True, we have Two of the greatest Encouragements to Religion that can be, namely the *Favour and Approbation of God and Man*.

In this Discourse I shall beg leave only to consider the latter, *the Favour and Good Understanding of Men*, which is promised in the Text to be also the Consequence of a Virtuous Life. For though the *Favour and Good Will of God*, being the Supreme Reward and Happiness of Man, is the greatest Encouragement, we must own, to Religion, and should carry off the First and Utmost of our Religious Regards, yet to have some little regard to the Acceptance of Men, and their good Esteem, as it is Natural to Mankind, so if it be in Subordination to God and for his Sake, it is every Man's Duty. For it is certainly God's Will that for the Comfort and Well-Being of Human Society, we should render our selves as agreeable to one another, as, without Violation to the divine Law and Honour, we can. For to approve our selves to Men and please Them within the Bounds of our Christian Liberty, is but consistent with the Love we owe to one another, and the Offices of Mutual Kindness and Beneficence; and is agreeable both to the Advice and Practice of St Paul, who commands that *Every one of us do please his neighbour for his good, (a) even as he himself pleased all men in all things (b)*. And we cannot besides suppose that Solomon the divine Preacher would have told his Son in the Context the means to procure the Esteem and Approbation of Men, nor mention'd it in the Text, as a Motive to a Religious Life, if the

(a) Rom. 8. 2. (b) 1 Cor. 10. 33.

Favour and good Understanding of Men were not things very desirable to human Nature, and the Desire of them, in some cases and respects, Lawful.

To shew therefore the Importance and Force of the Wise Man's Argument, which encourages Religion from the Favour and Good Understanding of Men, I shall

FIRST Endeavour to shew what great Desires Men have to approve Themselves to the World, and obtain a Favourable Understanding in the sight of Men.

SECONDLY in order to evince the Truth of the Wise Man's Doctrine, I shall farther endeavour to shew, That a due and strict Regard to Religion and Virtue is the best means of obtaining the so much desir'd Favour and Good Understanding of Men.

THIRDLY and Lastly, I shall Conclude the whole with a Brief Exhortation to Virtue and Religion.

FIRST I am to shew what great Desires Men have to approve Themselves to the World and gain a favourable Understanding in the sight of Men. This I shall do very briefly, that I may the more largely insist upon the Second Head which seems to be the more direct Design and Doctrine of the Text.

This then is very easy to be conceiv'd by any One who from his own daily observation, Considers what various methods Men take to recommend themselves to the World, and reconcile their Manner and Deportment to it; how particularly they regard the Opinions of others; and how pleasing to the Mind of every one is Praise or a good Reputation.

'Tis something Strange and yet but Common to observe that notwithstanding the blind and partial Fondness which all Men have for themselves, and
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the candid Judgment which upon that Account they are apt to make upon their own Conduct and Abilities, there is nevertheless an Universal Submission, in a great measure, to the Judgments and Humours of other Men. For how many do we see take their RELIGION, the most Sacred and Important of all human Concern, and which every one should be more particularly Curious to Consider and Examine, before he Subscribes upon Servile Trust? And so to avoid contradicting the Received Opinion of their Friends or Country, make Themselves Profelytes to Men, more than to God. For in hopes to obtain their better Esteem and Countenance they pay an Implicit Deference and Submission to their Judgments.

And though besides Men have Inclinations of their own to gratifie (and to gratifie their Desires must needs be pleasing) yet nothing is more common than to see Men do Violence to their own, to fall in with those of others. Hence it is that the Fashions of the World are so *Religiously* observ'd, and Men forego their own private Fancy, to appear according to that of the Publick. What the World puts any Value or Esteem upon, that commonly is the Object of Pursuit. And tho' the World vary in it's Modes never so often or Capriciously, yet the New ones are constantly complied with, without any serious regard to the Levity or Importance of them.

Hence the Condescending Popularity of the Courtier, who builds his Fortune and his Character upon the Plausible Resentment and Esteem of Men: Hence proceed all the Ceremony and Complement of the World: Hence the exact Caution of many Men's Behaviour, which if it did not appear offensive to Men and become obnoxious to their Censures,

Censures, they would not perhaps regulate: Hence that restraining Shame of an Ill Cause, and the Shameful Desertion of a Good One: Hence the Hypocrite's Wicked Abomination, who Forces a Religion to be seen of Men: Hence also the Designing Larve of general Dissimulation, and the pains Men are at, to make their Expressions agreeable and their Sense compatible with every One's Interpretation: Hence in short, out of a Desire to be approved by Men, and to establish a Character, the Curious Labours, Enterprizes and Endeavours of Ancients and Moderns; for the Love of Praise is a thing rooted and interwoven in our very Constitution; it appears in the early Complacency which Little Children have in Commendations, in the Active Emulations of Youth, and under the more disguised Behaviour of Men of Years: and there is scarce one to be met with so much Abandon'd to his own Will and Caprice, but would, if he could, without denying himself the Gratifications of his more predominant Passions, delight in a Character, or a favourable Understanding in the sight of Men.

This I hope being sufficient to Testifie the Truth I first propos'd to Consider and Evince, I hasten now

SECONDLY, To shew that a Due Regard to Virtue and Religion is the best Means of obtaining the so much desired FAVOUR and GOOD UNDERSTANDING of Men.

And here if we trace the Merits of our Ancestours and Examine the Records of Ancient and Modern Histories for the Reasons of their Character and Applause, we shall find that from the beginning of the World, VIRTUE has been the Foundation of Praise, and the good Actions of Men the Source of
their

their surviving Glory. Sometimes 'tis true, we find Things Recorded to the Honour of Men which are not strictly Honourable and Virtuous, but perhaps the contrary; but then they are Recorded out of a Mistaken Apprehension of Virtue in the Historian, and being thought by Him Matters of Commendation, and agreeable to his Judgment, ill inform'd, he transmits them to Posterity under Characters of Virtue. So that Virtue is the general Pretence of every Approbation: which shews the Universal Consent of Men that *it* only is Praise worthy. All things else which Adorn Mankind either in Mind or outward Circumstances are Things indifferent: high Quality in Birth or Station, great Riches or Abilities of Understanding, are Advantages all of a Common Nature, which both the Wicked and Religious may be equally Masters of; so that upon that Account there is no Difference between them. Now the Virtues of Religion do not lessen the real Value of such common Privileges, but rather add to their Decorum and Esteem. For to Instance to you in the forementioned Particulars, a Person Valuable on Account of his Birth and Meritorious Ancestors, tho' he has all the Deference and Submission shew'd him, due to his Superior Rank; yet if Himself be adorned with Religious Graces and Simular Virtues to his renowned Relations; if he has acquired the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit; is easy of access, is affable and kind in his Conversation, just and good in his Resolves and Executions; he will be the more Honour'd and Respected for These his *Personal* good Qualities, and surely more universally beloved than if he wanted such Religious Endearments, and was proud and haughty, supercilious and reserv'd, as well as injurious to his inferior Neighbours.

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Again, If Riches be the foundation of great and popular Respect, and a Man's Treasure magnifies the splendour of his Condition, yet if he expends of his Abundance in Acts, of Kindness, and Charitable Beneficence, and abounds in *good works* as he does in Plenty, it will not derogate from the Merit of his great Possessions, but add to the Credit of them, and gain him the desirable Character as of a Rich, so of a *good and faithfull Steward*, a rich Benefactor to Mankind, and a just Dispenser of Providential Blessings.

So again in any Post of Authority and great Power, if a Man Employs it for the Good of Mankind, for the Maintenance of Peace and Equity, for the Service and kind Relief of the Injured and Oppressed; his religious Regards will by no means Depreciate his Honours, but Enhance the Dignity of his Character, and endear him more to the Affections of those who observe his Conduct, than if he used his Power and Promotion to be distinguish'd only from the Crowd below, and to make himself more dreaded than beloved by them.

Then as to the Abilities of the Understanding, when a Man has made a commendable Proficiency in Knowledge, it can certainly be no Diminution to his Character, that his Learning and Parts be accompanied with Virtue, or that he adds to his *Wisdom of a serpent, the innocence and simplicity of a dove.*

For a Man, who having distinguish'd himself from others by eminent degrees of Knowledge, employs it to the Benefit of Mankind, and freely communicates it to Inform, Advise, and Improve Human Nature, and has no other Views in his generous use of it, than to Remove Error and Establish Truth, to Promote God's Glory, and the Good of Men; as

he Deserves greater Praise and Favour for such additional good Principles; so Men are naturally apt to give it him: and to Respect and Love him more than *Those* who search the depths of Learning purely to Exalt themselves above the Common level, and to vilifie and ridicule the unequal Endowments of others, which cannot be raised to the same Pitch of Improvement: And who like our *Modern AR-RIANS* and *Christian DEISTS* use their Learning and Abilities to Puzzle Mankind and to Oppose Revelation; to conceal, more than they discover, Truth, and perplex the Merits of a Religious Cause; and make their distinguish'd Attainments (otherwise commendable) wicked Instruments of confirming Prejudices, and bringing human Nature into a more corrupt Degeneracy of Ignorance and Prophane Error: who have such a *wicked* Fondness for their own Reason, that they disdain to submit it even to GOD and his AUTHORITY; and so Force it, against the true bent of it's Nature, to maintain scruples of mere Supposition and wanton Imagination; labouring thereby to make *Divinity* appear Absurd, and *Religion* Despicable; to recommend I suppose their conceited Superiority of *penetration* into Mysteries, and their Skill in *intimate* but SOPHISTICAL Reasoning. Surely such wicked uses of a great Understanding, and such profane Cavils against Divine and Infallible Truths, cannot render a Man of Learning and Parts so amiable and approved, as when Modesty, and Integrity, and Christian Charity are the distinguishing parts of his Character.

Thus the Ornaments of Religion are the true foundation of Esteem, and the best Topicks of deserved Praise: without These Man is but a rational kind of Brute, nay not so much, if to be Rational implies

implies a Conformity to, as well as a Natural Endowment with Reason. For Religion, with respect to Practice, is but *a fairer Coppy of Reasonable Laws*: and to be *Religious* is no more than to be *truly Rational*. To be Irreligious therefore is to act contrary to Reason's Prescripts, and to Degenerate from the Created Dignity of our Nature; which cannot be approved by any but who Themselves are sadly fallen into the same vile Apostacy. Christian Virtue is the very Perfection of Reason, and was revealed in Holy Scripture to perfect and purify Mankind from it's acquired Pollution, and to restore Man to the same Brightness of the Divine Image in which he was at first Created.

Abilities therefore, whether External, or belonging to the Mind, whether Natural or Acquired, if they want the Refinements and Direction of VIRTUE, are no Foundation for just Merit or Applause; They are imperfect Things to form a Character, and borrow their Lustre, as the Stars from the Sun, from the ornament of Religious Graces.

I beg leave to illustrate this, by making or supposing One Instance out of the highest Order and Rank of Men; a King, let him be never so Absolute in his Prerogative, and Peremptory in his Decree, If he Rule without the Fear of Him whose Sovereignty he was Anointed to Represent; If he has no Religious Regards to Justice and the true Interest and Happiness of his People, he may indeed be DREADED, as a *Tyrant that can do Mischief*, but he cannot be so well Esteemed and Beloved, nor receive that chearful and willing Obedience, as a Religious and a Wise Prince, who primarily Intends the Divine Glory, and Studies to preserve Those committed to his Charge, in *Peace, Wealth, and God-*

liness: A Prince whose Care for his Subjects is as Universal as his Right to Govern them, and his Love as general as their dutyful Obedience, who Distributes his Favours with an Impartial Hand, according to the most conspicuous Merit, making Those that are most Faithful in their Allegiance, and most Accomplished in their Trust, the most Distinguish'd in their Honours, and the Closest in his Royal Embraces; that so like his Great and Heavenly Master, he may Approve himself to Him *No Respector of Persons, but that in every Station, he that worketh Righteousness, is accepted by him.* And *whoso* among Princes *doth these things shall never fall*; fall neither in the good Esteem and Affection, nor by the Hands of his Subjects, but their Loyalty and Gratitude, and Love shall ever Defend and Honour him whilst he Lives, and do Justice to his Pious and Renowned Memory when he is call'd to God, and gathered to his Royal Ancestors.

It would also be very easy to Instance to this purpose out of every other Condition in Human Life, Those especially in High Places (whose Conduct is more universally observ'd, and their Opportunities and Power, greater to do Good) that the more Virtue they carry and display in their Dispositions and Behaviour, or the more HONOUR and CONSCIENCE (as the world calls it) they Exemplifie in their Station, the more they will be honoured, and respected, and beloved by Men.

Indeed sometimes Good Men may have Enemies, and Bad Ones (such as are falsely so call'd) their Friends; but these Friends to the Latter, are always such as themselves, or say, *the Lord prosper you, we wish you good luck.* And the Love which they pretend is little more than a cheerful Concurrence
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in the same Iniquity: for Friendship between the wicked is impossible, that Relation being too religious and sacred for such to be tied in. And surely such a Concurrence, and all the Approbation and Applause of the Wicked, can be no Advantage, but is rather an additional Reproach to a Character, for Iniquity cannot like a good Action be the more commendable, for being more general and extensive.

And as for the Enemies of Good Men, Men adorned with all the lovely Endearments of Virtue and Religion, They are Monsters in their Nature, and deviate from the sober sense of Reason; and therefore like Monsters are to be accounted for, Things Strange and Uncommon; and if in this case they be more Common and Numerous to be met with, it proves only the great and monstrous degeneracy of Mankind, but does not disprove the Truth of the Text; Virtue ever having a Native Tendency to procure Favour and Affection from Uncorrupt Mankind.

Thus it appears that Religion is the true Standard of Praise; and the more good any one does, whether he be Prince or Subject, and the more Piety Sobriety and Justice his Life is adorned with, the more he certainly deserves, and the more he will enjoy of, the good Esteem and Love of Men.

Of a Truth good Men will necessarily esteem and embrace such a One, in regard to Justice as well as Virtue's own Endearment; and I am persuaded also that Bad Men have a secret Veneration for Those that are truly Good; though their own Wickedness is too great, and is too self condemning, to confess it. For Vertue has in it Charms to Captivate the most uncivilized of Men, and steals their
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Approbation, as a Loadstone the embrace of Iron, with force unseen; which is an Argument that Virtue and human Reason have an Unseparable and Everlasting Sympathy. For Virtue being the Offspring of ETERNAL REASON, the Rational Faculty of Man which is the Image of That, cannot but have a kind of *Σύμφυτον* or Natural Inclination for it. Why else does Vertue in every resemblance so please and delight the Soul? or why is the Character of an *honest good* Man so agreeable, and we feel a kind of warmth and secret Inclination to him when his Name is mention'd? 'tis because his name recollects and brings to mind his Virtues, and his Virtues strike us into Approbation and Esteem for him. And there is not an Example of one single Virtue which enters a Moral or a Christian Character, but what endears a Man's Conduct to the Rational World, and has a Commanding sweetness belonging to it: let us just mention a few.

How pleasing and ornamental to a Noble Birth, are Humility and Innocence? How Graceful and Engaging in a Person of great Abilities of Understanding, are Modesty and Affability, when his Parts are neither blemished with Conceit, nor conceal'd by guilty Bashfulness; but flow in solid and easy Sense, Useful and Delightful to his enamour'd Hearers? How commendable with Power and great Wealth, are Christian Charity and Generosity? in a Place of Trust, Fidelity and Constancy? in any Calling, Honesty and Sobriety? in Prosperity, a religious Gratitude and Beneficence to Men? in Adversity, Patience and a tacit Resignation? and in every Condition of Life, how Commendable are a Regular Piety, a constant Christian Loyalty and a Brotherly Love? I say a Christian Loyalty to uphold it from
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those Ill Men, who have Construed and Distinguished it down into FACTION, EXIGENT RESISTANCE, and ARBITRARY REBELLION. True Loyalty and that which best maintains the Divine Dignity of a Crown, and the Due Reverence in Subjects, is the Loyalty prescrib'd by St *Paul*, who by divine Authority and Inspiration absolutely prohibits Resistance, Because it is resisting the ORDINANCE of God. And if God in prescribing Loyalty, or the Rule of Human Allegiance to his Vicegerents upon Earth, has put no *Case* for Resistance, i. e. NO TIMES AND SEASONS FOR REBELLION, it is Presumption in Man to put a *Reserve* upon his own Duty, and more to Maintain his partial Obedience.

Thus Christian Loyalty and all the other Virtues of a Moral or a Christian Life, as They are the Indispensible Duties of all who profess and call themselves Christians, so They are the Best and Greatest Ornaments of all, who call themselves Men; and not only Recommend them to the Present and Future Mercies of HEAVEN, but in the mean Time to the *Favours* and *Good Esteem* of Mankind.

To Conclude therefore this Discourse: What Remains, (since Religion is the best Ornament of every Station, and the sure and sole Foundation of deserved Applause, (but that we all learn perfectly to Accomplish our selves, and Adorn our Lives with it's Graces and Perfections.

And since the Christian Religion is the only True and Divine Religion upon Earth (the Jewish being contain'd and reform'd in the Christian) Let us who are professedly Christians, and engaged by the Solemn and Sacramental Oath in Baptism, make it's divine Doctrines, contained in the Old and New Testament, the sole Rule of our Faith and Practice.

And

And since our Own National Church, the Church of *England* as it is by the Laws Establish'd, is the purest Church of Christian Professors upon Earth, Let us with daily Gratitude to Heaven for being Members of it, firmly adhere to it's uncorrupt Principles, and make our Lives as pure as her Doctrines.

And as Our most Excellent Church is the Glory of all Lands in it's Constitution, so let the Vertues, we may Learn in it, make us, in Our Examples and Moral Characters, the best and most esteem'd of all People.

And let none be asham'd to maintain and hold fast *his Integrity* like Job *'till he Dies*; nor to be too timorous to DARE TO BE HONEST IN THE WORST OF TIMES: for Constancy in Virtue, as it is the best and most blazing Character which a Man or Christian is capable of, so to shew it, in Times of Danger and prevailing Impiety, is the best Argument of Sincerity in our Religion, which will Recommend us to God most High above all things, and make our Conduct pleasing to This, and all Succeeding Generations.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all Honour, Praise, and Thanksgiving, Now and for Evermore. Amen.

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